

T H E

Forc'd Marriage:

Or the Miseries and afflicting

CALAMITIES

Of the Unhappy

Miss BETSEY WARD.

This beautiful young Lady was the daughter of an eminent Grocer; his Apprentice a young Gentleman named Potter, possessed of a few Hundred Pounds paid his addresses to her, which she accepted, he being near out of his Time, and for a while affairs went on in a state of mutual Love; but Fortune changes, she is courted by a Rich Merchant's Son, and Mr. Potter thro' an unlucky accident Dies; her Father compels her to marry the Merchant, then by the wickedness and treachery of Lydia her Cousin, she is made most miserable ever after while she lived.

L O N D O N:

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OR
Miss BETSEY WARD.

MISS BETSEY WARD, the beautiful young Creature I am going to speak of, was the daughter of a Grocer in London; a Man who was no farther oblig'd to Fortune, than for a bare subsistence for himself and Family. The Obscureness of Betsey's Birth could not eclipse the uncommon Charms Nature had bestowed on her. She was at the Age of Seventeen, solicited by many of the Neighbours Sons for a Wife, some of whom had much better Fortunes than she could expect, considering the small portion her Father could give with her. But Betsey, whose Wishes were humble to her Fortune, without a Thought of aspiring to higher Life, had fixt her Virgin Affections upon a young Man (whom I will call Pot-

ter) an Apprentice to her Father who was within two Months of being out of his Time. This young Couple had been long happy in mutual Love, and had plan'd their future Happiness ; which was to begin, soon as his servitude expir'd.

Potter had to the amount of Three Hundred Pounds, withwhich he intended to set up his Business, and make Betsey his Wife.

Before these tedious Days were expir'd, Mr. Ward had an Account, that an Aunt who lived in a little Village near London, upon a small Annuity was dying.

As he had then a large Order to finish he could not attend his relation himself, so sent his Daughter Betsey to Dulwich, to receive his Aunt's last Commands, but came too late, for before she arriv'd the old Gentlewoman was dead. What little Effects she had, she had willed to a Niece that lived with her, whom I shall distinguish by the Name of Lydia, Betsey, after seeing things properly dispos'd of, and the Funeral perform'd, return'd to her Father, and brought Lydia, with her, who was well receiv'd by Mr. Ward, not only on Account of her being a Relation, but because his daughter had taken a particular fancy to her.

In the Village where the whole Aunt died, there lived a young Gentleman, Son of a great Merchant,



chant, who was just come to his Fortune, and spar'd no expence to let the World see he was his Father's Heir. Betsey's Beauty attracted the Eyes of this youth. He first saw her at her Aunt's Funeral, where the decent Grief she express'd upon the melancholly Occasion, which added fresh lustre to her Charms, so engaged the heart of young Devolle (so we shall call him) that without ever speaking to her he enquir'd out her Family, and came the next Day to her Father.—Told him his Name, Family and Fortune, offer'd to settle a handsome Income upon him, and make his daughter a large Jointure, if she would immediately become his Wife.

Potter who, by Accident was passing by the Parlour Door, and hearing something mentioned of Betsey, and Marriage (as lovers Ears are always open) ventured to listen and took in all the Discourse. Distracted at what he heard he ran to Betsey, and trembling, told her the Proposal Mr. Devolle had made to her Father, beg'd she would oppose it or all his happiness was lost for ever.

Betsey, who had not any of the vanity of her sex about her, with a smile reply'd; "No Potter, I am not to be bought: If I have any thing agreeable about me, Nature give it me, and I will as freely bestow it on one of her Sons whom I think deserves it, and that Son are you. I have given you my heart and can't recall it. I have given you my Promise, and no earthly power shall make

me break it." This Behaviour of Betsey's made Potter entirely easy, and he had reason to be so, for what she had said was sincere, without the least Art of Equivocation.

Betsey's Prospect of Happiness was not from Wealth, State, or Power, but from Love, Virtue and Moderation—But her Fathers ambition went higher. He was charm'd with the Hopes of seeing his Daughter in a Chariot, blazing with Jewels, and envied by his less fortunate Neighbours. To see her the Admiration of every publick assembly, the Toast of every wealthy Coxcomb, and deck'd with all the external Glare of Happiness, not considering that true Felicity lies only in the Gratification of our wishes; and, if pomp is not the Object of them, Jewels lose their Lustre, and Grandeur turns into Fatigue.

Devolle was no sooner gone, than Mr. Ward sent for his daughter, embrac'd her tenderly; saying, "Now my dear Child I can make thee happy. Think no more of Business, for thou shalt be a Lady. A Man of Fortune and Honour is fallen in Love with my dear Betsey; and, if he does not change his Mind (which Heaven forbid he should) thou shalt shake off all thy future cares and be Marry'd this Week.

Betsey, with great prudence (for she did not care to dash his Joy at once, by telling him she was engag'd answer'd) "Dear Sir, I can't but confess
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the great Obligations I have to your Care of me, and the Duty I ought to pay your fatherly Love; But in this Case, your good wishes for me make you too precipitate. I have never seen the young Gentleman yet, nor has he e'er spoke to me. It is probable upon a farther Knowledge of me his Passion may abate: Or, on conversing with him, 'tis possible I may have so much dislike to him that all his Fortune can't make me happy,"—Oh! my dear Daughter! replied he, he is a Gentleman born and bred! you can't but like him! Besides my Dear consider his Fortune and don't be too nice about his Person. You'll make all your Family happy!

Betsey would have answer'd, but he went on; saying, "Peace my Child, and prepare yourself to meet your Fortune. Mr. Devolle waits for me at the Coffee House. I'll go and tell him you'll be ready to receive his Visit in an Hour's Time. Put on your best Cloaths, and blooming Looks. Confirm your Conquest and make us all happy."

With these Words he left her, and gave the young Potter an Opportunity of repeating his Vows of Love, and making a farther Impression the Heart of tender Betsey, who was so pleas'd with his conversation, that she forgot her Father's Commands to dress herself but sat listening to his fond Discourse, 'till her Father return'd with the enamour'd Devolle.

Mr.

Mr. Ward's Countenance soon discover'd the rage he was in at Betsey's Disobedience. He could scarce keep his Temper enough to introduce the Lover to his Daughter; nay, did observe, "Child I think you might have had respect enough to this Gentleman to have dress'd yourself to receive him, if not Duty enough to obey my Orders. The Gallant presently put a stop to the Argument; by saying, "O, Sir, Dress is not what I regard, Miss shines more in native Simplicity, than the finest Court-Lady with all the Additions of Art and Extravagance.

Mr. Ward was pleas'd with Devolle's Compliment, and his good humour return'd. He soon took an Occasion to leave the Room to give the Lover an Opportunity of declaring his Passion, so impatient was he to have the Match concluded.

As Betsey was a modest innocent Girl, Devolle could get nothing from her but simple Answers to his Discourse. Many of his high flights of Rapture she did not understand, and thereby could only reply with a Blush. She had been used to the plain honest Addresses of Potter, where spoke in his own native Language without the Ornaments of Poetry or Compliments of Fashion.

Notwithstanding Betsey's reserv'd Behaviour, Devolle was greatly pleas'd with it, and her Silence which was partly owing to Ignorance, and partly to Aversion, he construed into Respect, and took it as a certain Token of her consent,

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The Father returning, he desired to see some Jewels, the best of which he bought and made Betsey a present of; which she would willingly have refus'd, but was afraid of her Father's Anger.

He had no sooner taken his Leave than Mr. Ward called his Daughter to examine her Inclinations towards the rich Man. He repeated the Advantages their Family would reap by this Match, and insisted upon it that she should settle her Affections upon Devolle, But in spite of all his Endeavours and persuasions could not draw one Word from her that could give him Hopes of her Compliance. She only answered with silent Tears, which spoke Sorrow and Abhorrence to his Proposal.

Mr. Ward, enrag'd at this stubborn Disobedience, threaten'd the utmost Severity if she did not comply with his Commands. He lock'd her up in her Chamber, and for two Days suffer'd nobody to come near her; and when Devolle renew'd his Visit; put him off by saying she was very ill; being unwilling he should see her again, 'till he had wrought her to give him a more favourable reception.

Potter was not in the least suspected to be the Occasion of Betseys Aversion to Devolle, therefore often heard Mr. Ward's Complaints: O my Boy said he, I thought this Offer to my Daughter would have made her happy and me blest; but, instead of that I am miserable by it. I will make her obey, tho' it goes to my Heart. Prithce tell me, Potter

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(continued)

(continued he) has she any Love Affair upon her Hands? Have you ever seen any young Fellow visit her in my Absence? To which the honest Potter, tho' much against his inclination was forc'd to reply in the Negative.

When Mr. Ward found Confinement had no Effect upon her, but rather gave her an Opportunity of indulging her Melancholly than bending her to his pleasure, he releas'd her and introduc'd her Lover, to try his further power to prevail upon her stubborness. But all in vain this interview was as successful as the last; all his Rhetorick could not bring her to a favourable Reply.

The first Opportunity Betsey could get she flew to Potter; told him, she saw her Father would persist, tho' to her Ruin and his own, adding, "There is but one Way to prevent it: That is to slip out of the House and get married, and let Fortune settle the rest." Potter, with joy embrac'd the Proposal, promis'd to get a Licence against the next Day and compleat their Wishes. But, poor Youth, as if Fortune forbid the Banns, that very Night being sent on some Business for his Master, crossing the Way hastily to avoid a Coach just coming upon him, fell down and broke his Leg, and was brought Home in a miserable condition. The Agony of the broken Limb, assisted by the Pangs of Heart he felt from his disappointed Love threw him into a violent Fever; in which he continued three Days and then expir'd in extreme Torture.

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From the first moment of the Accident that befel Potter, Betsey had shewn particular Sorrow, spite of her endeavours to stifle it : But when she heard of the Catastrophe, she burst out in the most outrageous manner tore her Hair and attempted to lay desperate Hands upon her Life ; nor could any one assign any Reason for this extravagant behaviour, farther than imagining she was seiz'd with a sudden Frenzy. The best Advice was immediately procur'd, and the best Remedies apply'd, and Lydia her Relation, ordered to assist the Nurse in attending her.

It had been observ'd before that Betsey had taken a particular liking to Lydia, ever since the death of her Aunt, ; which liking, by their being long under one Roof, had grown into an intimacy : And tho' Betsey had never yet entrusted her Friend with this Love Secrets yet now, when it had come to this desperate Determination, she let her into the whole Secret of the Heart ; declar'd the Affection she had not long born to Potter ; how she had plotted to deceive her Father and marry him, had not that fatal Accident prevented it ; and that her present Grief was owing to the disappointment of her Lover.

Lydia, whether mov'd with hopes of getting more into Mr. Ward's Favour, or to insinuate herself in the good Graces of Devolle I know not, but as soon as Betsey had open'd her Heart to her, she went directly and related all she was entrusted with

to her Father ; and, lest he should not inform the Lover of it, as soon as Mr. Devolle came to visit her she let him too into all the Particulars. The Tale had no Effect upon Devolle's Passion for he really lov'd her ; or, if it had it only heighten'd his Inclinations. He burst out in Rapture ; crying, " How much am I oblig'd to Fortune ! since my Rival is remov'd, my dear Betsey may still be mine.

I don't doubt but Lydia, seeing this Gentleman had been so generous to his Mistress at the first visit, thought he would not have let this Intelligence gone without it's Reward, but she was deceiv'd, for the enraptur'd Lover flew to his mistress without acknowledging the Obligation. Mr. Ward advis'd him not to let Betsey know that he was acquainted with her former Engagement, but go on with his Courtship in the same manner, as if no such Circumstances had ever appeared ; adding I don't doubt Sir, but your Addresses assisted by my Commands, together with the lucky removal of Potter will soon subdue her inclinations, and make her consent to your Happiness and her own.

He then conducted Devolle to her Bedside ; where Betsey weaken'd and hurt by Sorrow had lost much of her Beauty. Devolle found it was not a proper Time to renew his Sollicitations, therefore only enquired of her Health, pray'd for her Recovery, and left the Room.

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He was no sooner gone, than Mr. Ward began to talk to her of her Lover, and begg'd she would consider her Rashness in pushing Fortune from her, when she courted her with all the Charms of wealth and Pleasure. Betsey promis'd to consider of the Affair; and give an Answer as soon as her Health would permit. This little inclining to his Will greatly rejoic'd Mr. Ward, which he immediately communicated to Mr. Devolle.

The Passion of Love now seem'd dead in Betsey. The Disappointment she had met with in her first Affections had drove out all Inclinations for any other Object: However, for three days, she could not help revolving in her Mind the unquiet Life she should lead for the future, if she did not comply with her Father's Commands. She therefore resolv'd to resign herself entirely over his Will and be perfect in her Obedience, tho' at the expence of her Happiness. This Resolution she told to Lydia, (who was always near her, and perpetually prying into her Secrets) adding, that since she had lost her own Content, her Father's peace of Mind was now her only Care: That she would immediately release him from his Anxiety, and marry Devolle upon the first Notice.

Lydia did not relish this resolve of Betsey's but us'd all Arguments to divert her from it, which plainly prov'd (tho' Betsey did not discover it till a long Time afterwards) that she had a design of engaging with Devolle herself, could she persuade her

her Friend to continue in her Obstinaey, and wean the Lover from his first Affections. Often would she say, “ Well, there is no Happiness in Life, without ease of Mind, and a Woman that marries a Man she can’t love must expect to be miserable, tho’ she was made a Queen by the Match.”—Betsey answer’d, I have given up all hopes of Happiness, they were bury’d with Potter, and therefore will obey my Father. Pish, cry’d the other you are young and don’t no what you do; but when you have a little more experience, you’ll curse the Hour you consented. I am as young as you; but thank Heaven I have more Understanding. Before I’d give a kind Look to a Man I despis’d, to please a superannuated Fancy of an old Father, I’d marry a Journeyman Tinker of my own chusing tho’ I was sure to spend the Remainder of my Life in a Garret.

Notwithstanding these Remonstrances Lydia’s Art miss’d its Aim; for Betsey had resolv’d, and no Description of future Miseries could make her waver in her Opinion. She sent for her Father, told him she was ready to obey his Command; and if Mr. Devolle had not alter’d his Affections, she was willing to meet his Wishes whenever he should appoint it.

Mr. Ward, overjoy’d at this sudden Alteration, sent immediately for Mr. Devolle; who obey’d the Summons, and all things were agreed. The Marriage was fixt for the Thursday following, which

was

was accordingly perform'd; and all the parties pleas'd except the disconsolate Bride, whose Heart was full of Lamentations for her lost Love, and not fraught with Wishes for her new Husband. Tho' this was her real state, yet she had Understanding enough to conceal her Thoughts, and assume an Air of decent Pleasantry, that charm'd the Heart of fond Devolle.

The Ceremony being over, Devolle order'd his Equipage, and took his Bride with him to his Country-Seat to consummate the Nuptials; and Lydia, at the request of Betsey was admitted one of the party.

Devolle was of a liberal and hospitable Nature, that upon this joyful Occasion he invited all the Country, Rich and Poor for some Miles round to participate of his Pleasure. His indulgence to his Wife was beyond Example. His only Study was to divert her; and, indeed this good Nature had the desir'd Effect, for in about a Month's Time Betsey began to relish his Conversation and enjoy the pleasure prepar'd for her.

Such is the Nature of Women-kind, however violent their Passion may be for a Time. Absence from the Object lov'd, with Kindness and Indulgence from a fresh one, will lull the Soul into a forgetfulness of past joys, and prompt it to a lively Sense of the present.

Lydia,

Lydia, now high in esteem both with Devolle and his Wife, was respected by the Family equally as themselves; appear'd as well dress'd, kept the same Company, and nothing was done in the House without her Advice. The Ascendant she had in the Family soon made her (as power always knows itself) assume an Air of Authority to Inferiors; and the Flattery she receiv'd from the Number of Visitants, gave a Tincture of the Coquet in her Behaviour to those above her. She was handsome, but by being often told so, she looked upon herself to be ten times more beautiful than she really was.

There is nothing more quick of Growth than Vanity in Woman, which is planted by their own Folly. Affection is the Fruit, which, when come to Ripeness we despise, and let it drop unregarded into contempt.

Mrs. Devolle, in two Months, was pregnant, to the great Joy of her Husband, who spar'd no Pains or Care to preserve his Wife in that dangerous Time and make himself a joyful Father.

But here fortune left him; for, two Months before her natural Time, Mrs. Devolle was deliver'd of a dead Child, and herself left in a Condition that did not promise a long Continuance in this World.

Devolle's Grief was equal to his Love, and his Concern for his Wife put a stop to all the pleasures
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he had so long indulged himself in, and a Period to the Hopes he had entertained of a Son to inherit his Estate.

Lydia as was before hinted, had a secret Design upon Devolle. She was at present high in his Esteem, and took this Opportunity of improving it, by shewing the greatest Diligence to restore his Wife; and, at Times reading him a Lecture of Comfort to support him in his Afflictions, expecting to succeed Mrs. Devolle, as a Reward for her indefatigable Friendship.

Mrs. Devolle continued ill for upwards of Half a Year without any Prospect of Amendment. Her Husband griev'd, without admitting any pleasure; and Lydia continued her Diligence, without once flagging in her part.

Devolle, tho' fond of his Wife, was young of a sprightly disposition, full of Vigour, and always in Company of an artful Woman; while his Wife remain'd incapable of giving him any Thing but Grief, without any Prospect of an Alteration in her Health.

This was his Situation, when he began to shew a warmer Passion to Lydia, than he had ever before thought of. She was not hard to work upon and Devolle soon had full possession of her.

Lydia, having brought her Scheme to some sort of Conclusion, no longer shew'd any particular

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Care

Care of Mrs. Devolle, but assum'd the Mistress; order'd her proper Attendance; and, it was with great importunity, she granted her the favour of a Visit. Devolle too, engag'd in a new Affection began to slight his once lov'd Betsey. He would pay her a slight Visit, enquire her Health; and with an Affected Concern, take the first Occasion of leaving the Room.

Mrs. Devolle neither suspected the Alienation of her Husbands Affections, nor the infamous Falshood of her Friend.—But would often with great Grief, say, “My poor Husband! my long Illness has quite destroy'd him. He can't bear to see me in this Condition. I feel so much for his Sorrow, that I wish I was dead, to be past the Sense of it, My dear Lydia is in the same Condition. She is so afflicted with my unhappy situation; that I am griev'd when she comes to visit me, lest it should disturb her Mind; for I know she loves me, and feels my Disease, in a greater Degree than I do myself.”

Lydia had, in her Correspondence with Devolle, obtain'd from him a promise of Marriage in Case his Wife should die. This the hot Youth without thinking of the Consequence, in his warm Hours of Lust, gave this wicked Creature. Her Business was now only to destroy the poor sick Betsey, whose Kindness had rais'd her, and immediately get into the Chariot and Six of Mrs. Devolle

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But Heaven, that never withholds its Protection from the Innocent, nor its Rod of Vengeance from the Guilty, by its Hands omnipotent restor'd the afflicted Wife to better Spirits, and her Physicians declar'd her out of Danger.

This was an unexpected blow to Lydia, who was pluming herself in all the Pride of her future Grandeur. Baseness is its own Prompter, and one Step gain'd will lead naturally to the next, 'till we obtain the Pinnacle of Wickedness, where we stand and view with Horror the steps of which we got so high; not daring to return, fearful to stay, and are forc'd to soar higher, for fear of being track'd.

This was Lydia's Case. She knew, spite of Devolle's Professions to her, Betsey's Recovery would turn her from his Favour: if not she could be but as a Mistress to him, while the lawful Wife assum'd her right, and dash'd at once all the ambitious Ends she had so long been labouring to obtain.

As Lydia was a great favourite of Devolle and his Wife, so, in her turn she had her Favourites among the Servants. One Rachel a House Maid in the Family, seem'd to be the first in her good Graces. To this Wench she communicated a Secret too dreadful for Imagination. She consulted with this Girl to poison Mrs. Devolle, as the only Means to advance her own Fortune, or put it in her Power to make Rachel's The Girl was inno-

cent, and not practis'd in the Trade of Murder, so declin'd being concern'd in the Action.

Lydia, frighten'd at her Refusal, and fearing she should disclose the secret, turn'd it off, by saying, 'She had heard something greatly to her Disadvantage, and took this method to prove her Honesty; adding, That since she found her trusty and faithful to her Mistress, she would take Care to advance her, and never let the scandals she had heard laid to her Charge be known." Rachel who was all Simplicity, thank'd her for her good will, and hop'd the Proof she had made of her Honesty would engage her Interest in her Favour, when Opportunity should offer.

Rachel's Behaviour was a caution to Lydia not to attempt any future Agent in her black scheme but to pursue the design by herself. Accordingly she procur'd some Poison; and, when the Phials of Medicines came from the Apothecary's, she carefully open'd three Bottles, and mix't some of the fatal Drugs in each of them.

But providence the stedfast Friend to Mrs. Devolle, hasten'd her Recovery so amazingly, that her Draughts were forbid; and Mr. Devolle, upon the Opinion of the Doctors, destroy'd all the Medicines, resolv'd to pursue their Advice, and let her take only healthy Exercise, and eat the tender Meats they had prescrib'd.

Lydia

Lydia was here strangely in the Dark ; for as she had plac'd the Phials ready for the Patients taking, upon searching found nothing in the room but empty Bottles, she imagin'd the Doses had been swallow'd, and expected every Minute to hear of Mrs. Devolle's Death, and the commencement of her Grandeur. But how was she surpriz'd when instead of hearing of her Death, she saw her encreasing in Strength and Vigour every Day, 'till, in a small Time she was entirely restor'd to her former Health and Bloom, and Mr. Devolle's Passion declining from his occasional Mistress, return'd again into the Bosom of his virtuous Wife,

Tho' Lydia was greatly enrag'd at this Alteration in the Health of Mrs. Devolle, whose Life she thought she had effectually put an End to and not less shock'd at the Change she saw her Lover's Behaviour towards her, yet she carried it off with an Affected Air of Good-humour, that neither made the Lady suspect she was sorry for her Recovery, nor the Husband think she perceiv'd he had withdrawn his Affections from her.—Indeed it was necessary for her not to put any Discontent, and bring it to a quarrel, for fear Rachel, upon a publick Rupture should declare what she had once propos'd to her, concerning the poisoning of her Mistress.

Notwithstanding the Escapes she had in her Villainy, in never being once suspected, but still caress'd by Mrs. Devolle, as tho' she were indeed the

the worthy Friend she took her for, she could not give over her wicked Projects, but laid a new plan of Mischief; resolv'd to make the virtuous Betsey, by some means or other, a Sacrifice to her insatiate thirst of Power and Riches.

The first step she took was to secure Mr. Devolle by taking every Opportunity of Privacy to express the great Love she had for him; desiring, at the same Time, he would be very cautious in shewing any particular Favour to her, that might raise Suspicions in his Wife, "For I know, added she, should she apprehend you threw away a Look of Kindness upon any Object but herself, it would break her Heart; and I am so tender of her, that tho' my own Happiness is at stake, I had rather forfeit that, than have her entertain a thought to make her uneasy." Devolle took this kindly, tho' it was striking at the Foundation of Felicity, domestick quiet.

It has been observ'd by more experienc'd Authors than myself that Men were design'd to be Fools to Women. We have many Instances to prove there is not any Wisdom in Man, strong enough to resist the light Temptations of the Female Sex, and I have observ'd the different Effects Declarations of Love have had upon the different Sexes. When a Man declares his Passion for a Woman, she immediately puts on a haughty Air of Commands, boasts of her Conquest, but never entertains one favourable thought of him: On the contrary

contrary, if a Woman Acknowledges her inclinations to one of our Sex, upon the News (tho' he had never seen her before) he takes a liking to her and proud of this Conquest, spies Beauties in her which would never have struck him, had she not made that Declaration in his Favour.

In this Trap was Devolle caught, Lydia's Professions of Love for him alarm'd his Vanity, and held him Captive to his own weakness; when if inclination might have had fair Play, the easy, unaffected Tendernefs of his Wife, would have satisfy'd the utmost Wishes of his Heart.

Among the Number of Gentlemen that visited Mr. Devolle, to congratulate him upon the unexpected Recovery of his Wife, Mr. Lawrence was the most particular. As he was a School Fellow of Mr. Devolle's, their intimacy began in their youthful Days, and still encreas'd with their Years.

This Gentleman had been often extravagant in his encomiums upon Lydia, which she had hitherto not construed into Love; for as he was a married Man, tho' parted from his Wife some Years, she could have no Thought that admitting his Addresses would turn to her Advantage,—But in order to raise some Commotions in the Family, that might draw Mr. Devolle's Affections from his Wife, she listen'd to his Commendations, seem'd pleas'd with his Flattery; and, to encourage him to persevere, gave some hint, that she had a Secret Liking to his
Person

Person. This Intimation added fresh Vigour to Lawrence's Passion, and his Visits were more frequent than usual, in order to catch every Opportunity of Conversing with Lydia.

While this Courtship was going on, she took Occasion to serve to Mr Devolle, that Mr. Lawrence was never out of the House; adding, "I can't imagine the Meaning of it.—He has certainly some Design upon some of us.—Aye, says Devolle, perhaps he has a mind to make Love to you. I shall be glad on't; for nothing would give me more Pleasure than to see you well settled.—Me! Replyd she in a Rage; I despise him: Besides he never said a civil Thing to me; or, if he had it would be in vain, for you know I am already engag'd: There is but one Life between me and Mr. Devolle—Thereby reminding him of his promise of Marriage, upon the Decease of his Wife.

Tho' Devolle did not like these Remembrances of his Folly, yet he was oblig'd to stifle his Distaste lest Lydia, in Fury, should take some Method to disclose his Falshood to his Wife.

Lawrence continued his Visits, while Lydia never fail'd to give him fresh Hopes, that he might not flag in his Attendance; and was sure, every Opportunity she could get, to take Notice of them to Devolle, 'till at length she brought him to conceive his Wife had some Design against his Honour, and that Lawrence's frequent visits were by her Appointment.

When

When once the mind is ting'd with Jealousy, the smallest Circumstance is Confirmation. It is a Passion of so particular and Mischievous a Kind, that it would take from the Pen of a common Writer, whole Volumes to explain, tho' that great Master of Nature and Poetry, Shakespear, has given us a full Description in a few Lines.

O, my Lord, beware of Jealousy;
It is greed ey'd Monster that doth MAKE,
It's Meat it FEEDS on, &c.

Added to the food Devolle's Passion made for his own Torment, Lydia (a Female Iago) still stood at his elbow to pour into his Ear poisonous Tales and Circumstances to keep the Monster that she had engender'd in his Mind.

To warn my Readers against this pernicious Polly the Bane to Happiness and Foe of Love, I can't help relating a trifling incident that happen'd in this Family.

As Lawrence often din'd with Mr. Devolle and his Wife, they happen'd one y among other Things to have a roasted Fow', remarkable for the Largeness of it's Liver. The Wing so decorated, was put upon Mrs. Devolle's Plate, but as she had an Aversion to Liver, she immediately took it out, and as Mr. Lawrence was the only Person there that did not belong to the Family, put it upon his Plate, with a harmless Compliment of saying, "I know you are fond of it, I can't
D touch

touch it——Mr. Devolle's Colour came and went in perpetual Agony, at the Action, and, not being able to contain himself, said, with Eyes that only Jealousy can point, “ I see Madam, you are as well acquainted with the Gentleman's Taste, as I am with yours.

The Words indeed might have escap'd the innocent Betsey, but the Looks attending them she could not but observe; yet (having no particular Meaning but Civility) simply reply'd, Yes, my Dear I know Mr. Lawrence is fond of the Liver, so I was willing to oblige him.——Stung with this second Mark of Love (as he took it) he threw down his Knife, and run out of the Room to the great Amazement of all the Company.

Mrs. Devolle, soon as she could recollect herself flew after him; and, in the Garden found him beating his Breast, and using all the Actions of one depriv'd of Reason.——Frighten'd at this odd Behaviour, she stood some Time without daring to speak: But at length ran up to him, embrac'd and wept over him, begg'd to know the Cause of his sudden Disorder, and whether ought in her Behaviour had disturb'd him.

Devolle, soften'd by her Tears, declin'd an Explanation, but laid the Fault upon Nature, saying “ A sudden pain shot through his Head, that seem'd the Forerunner of Madneſs; but that the Air had somewhat cooled him, and he hoped the Disorder
would

would soon be over desiring her to return to the Company, that they might not take his Indisposition for rudeness.

Betsey return'd with the joyful News that Mr. Devolle was much better, and would be with them immediately. Lydia, fearing his Passion might cool, took an Opportunity of leaving the Room, in order to join the jealous Husband, and encourage the Seeds her Villainy had sown.

Soon as Lydia found Devolle, she began with Entreaties to him that he would moderate his Passion, saying, " This hasty Humour will hinder your ever coming to the Truth, for if she is guilty which I can't believe of her, do you think, if she sees you perceive it, it won't put her upon her guard, and prevent conviction?"

This, with doubtful Phrases, under the pretence of soothing his Rage, blew it up to double Fury. He vow'd revenge upon Lawrence; swore he would be parted from his Wife that Hour; alledg'd a thousand Crimes against her, before never thought of or ever acted, but born immediately of his own Brain.

Lydia, tho' she knew them all False, with affected Wonder heard his Complaints: added, with a hypocritical Sigh " I could never have thought it of her. — A Phrase which, delivered from an artful Tongue, has done more Mischief than all the base Explanations Villainy ever forged.

In this manner did this Wicked Woman blow up the Rage of a Jealous Husband, in order to ruin an innocent and virtuous Wife : then let it down again by insisting she should keep a shew of Love and Temper, 'till some Proof appeared to countenance his Resentment, adding, " That she would keep the strictest Eye upon her Actions, and that, if Betsey had any Designs against his Honour, she did not doubt but her cautious Enquiries would find them out : And promised, the first Moment she found Cause to suspect her Honesty, her Regard and Friendship for him would let him know it continuing, with a feigned Sorrow, O, my dear Devolle ; she is not sensible of your Merit ; if she did but know it, or respected it as I do, she would not give you Occasion to suspect her.

This, and much more to the same Purpose, was the Conversation between the impious Lydia and the deceiv'd Devolle in the Garden ; while poor Betsey sat joyless with Mr. Lawrence in the Parlo r, reflecting on the strange and sudden Alteration that had appeared in her Husband.

Lydia, and Mr. Devolle now joined the Company. He put on an affected Gaiety, complain'd of the sudden Disorder that had seiz'd him, but blessed his Stars that it was soon removed.

The Face and Tongue are bad Hypocrites, unless the Heart join in the Confederacy ; and Mr. Devolle (however weak in some Things) had no Baseness

Baseness there to conduct his Features, in properly regulating his Muscles for Deceit. Spite of his assuming Mirth, his Wife could perceive a lurking Anger, that Disimulation could not cover. Mr. Lawrence too was not insensible of the Alteration, tho' Ignorant of the Cause. He took his Leave, but not before he had given Lydia a Hint that he wanted to speak with her. She immediately granted his Request, and walked with him thro' the Garden, which led to the Stable where his Horse stood.

Devolle and his Wife being now in private, she began to be more particular in her Enquiries concerning his Health; and when he endeavoured to throw it off, by laying the Fault on Nature, she drop't some Hints, that prov'd she doubted his Veracity, and upon his refusing any other Reply, she burst out, O my unhappy Fortune! how am I cursed, to have the only Man I love keep his Sorrow to himself, and me not share of it!—Does any thing in the Family, continued she, disturb you? Perhaps you are uneasy that I keep my Cousin Lydia so long with us? if so, only tell me, and I'll immediately provide for her Departure.—Have you repented of your Marriage? if you have, let me know it: and order me any trifling substance you please, in any part of the World you like, I'll accept it with Pleasure, and never shew any Sorrow, if it will put an end to yours.

Devolle

Devolle, instead of taking this Proposal for the Effect of Humility and Obedience to his Will, as it was meant, look'd upon it as a Desire to part from him, and an artful Design to throw the blame of Separation upon his Caprice and ill Usage. No Wonder if a Man, infected with such Notions should be no longer capable of Deceit, but give free Way to his Indignation; which Devolle would have certainly done, had not Lydia that Instant come in and put an end to his hasty Proceeding.

This sudden entrance of Lydia was the most unlucky incident to Betsey in her whole Story; for had she staid ten Minutes longer, Devolle, unable to contain himself, had explain'd the whole Cause of his uneasiness, and told the Object that gave him pain; which would have given his Wife from knowing the Accusations against her, an Opportunity of clearing her Innocence; but now, poor Creature she was left in the Dark. She saw her Husband enrag'd herself blam'd, and all their late scenes of Happiness remov'd without being able to assign one Reason, or take a step to renew their Tranquility.

Betsey, shock'd at her Husband's Behaviour, without acquainting Lydia with his Anger, retir'd to her Chamber. and throwing herself upon a Couch, cry'd out. "O what a Wretch has my Obedience to my Father made me! He urg'd me to the Marriage, and I forc'd my Inclinations to his Will. But I was Born to be unhappy! My Mother

Mother died while I was in the Cradle. My Father cherish'd me till I came to have Sense of his Indulgence, and then Love stept in to alter my Affections, and prompted me to deceive my Father. Fortune, knowing my Crime robb'd me of all my Soul held dear. Duty then step'd in and oblig'd me to join my Hand to a Man that had no Interest in my heart, yet, even here, my Obedience supply'd my want of Affections, and I have shewn myself, in every shape, an honest and Indulgent Wife. Yet all won't do, Misery has mark'd me for her own, and I must submit. My Husband has taken some Dislike to my Behaviour; I have innocently offended him, and he is not kind enough to let me know my Crime, or give me Opportunity to retrieve my Credit with him." With these Words she burst into a Flood of Tears, and continu'd silent till Lydia came into the Room, and told her Mr. Ward was come to visit her. Betsey, in Grief and Agony cry'd out, "I have no Father! nor will I see any one that owns that Title.

Spite of her Refusal Lydia immediately introduced her Father, whose Astonishment was not to be paralleled at seeing his Daughter drowned in Tears, whom he expected to find revelling in Pleasure. Before he could speak, Betsey threw herself at his Feet. crying out, O Father! how unhappy have you made me! I never coveted this Pomp and splendor, they neither suited my Birth or Inclinations. Ambition is always attended
with

with Misery. Had I been married to my Equal I had been happy, but to please you I have step'd out of the plain path I would have kept; and, instead of meeting the Reward of Duty, I have wandered into Sorrow.

Mr. Ward said all he could to comfort her; and, having brought her a little to herself, enquir'd minutely into the Cause of her Affliction, which Mrs. Devolle related with flowing Tears and a breaking Heart.

The Father, tho' greatly touch'd with his daughter's Sorrow made light of it; saying, My Dear you don't know the World, Men will have Humours that are not always pleasing. There are a Thousand Accidents in Life to ruffle our Tempers, which a little soothing brings into Tune again. You must not think so much of Mr Devolle's passion; be you but kind and patient, it will subside of Course. I would have you put on a chearful Look, for your Tears inflame his Rage, and add to his Uneasiness, instead of softening it. Nor would I have you let him know I am at all acquainted with it, for there is a Pride in Man that cannot relish Complaints against him, and a Husband will be the Judge of his own Cause, and admit no Meditation. Many Women have made themselves and Families unhappy, by publishing their Husbands Frailties; whereas if they had secretly endeavoured, by gentle Means, to amend them

them, they had prov'd effectual, and the Consequence been Happiness. Reproof begets Obstinacy; and, rather than bear the publick Shame of being wrong, we endeavour by any Means to vindicate our conduct to the World, tho' at the same Time our Hearts in private acknowledge the Injustice.

Betsey was greatly delighted with this Discourse, and resolv'd to follow her Father's Advice. She immediately cleared up her Sorrows, attended her Father to the Door, who did not chuse to see Mr. Devolle at this Juncture, and went to seek her Husband, fully determined to use all her power to calm his ruffled Spirits.

Lydia, who had listened at the Door during Mrs. Devolle's Discourse with her Father, now flew to Mr. Devolle to acquaint him with the Particulars of what she had heard, not without some Additions that made for her Design. Upon the hearing Mr. Devolle cry'd out, "Has she not cunning enough herself to deceive me, but she must call in the Assistance of her Father." He would have said more, and perhaps have wound himself up in a new Passion; but, seeing his Wife coming towards him, by the Advice of Lydia, he contain'd himself.

Betsey, with all the Delicacy of Innocence and Tenderneſs of Love accosted her Husband,
E
joined

joined with an easy Good-humour, that denoted an entire Forgetfulness of all that had pass'd. In short her Behaviour was so agreeable that Devolle, spite of the Poison in his Mind, could not help being sensible of her Charms and returning her Caresses; till at length, quite overcome with Fondness he retir'd with his Wife, and left the malicious Lydia to meditate on Mischief by herself.

Lydia was not at all pleased with this Prospect of a reconciliation between Devolle and his Wife, therefore was determined to bring her Scheme into a speedy Execution.

It has been already observed that of late she had given great Encouragement to Mr. Lawrence, in order to lead him to bear a part (tho' unknowingly) in her wicked Design: She had already fir'd the mind of Devolle with Jealousy, and now there only wanted some slender proof to confirm him in the Dishonesty of his Wife; the Consequence of which would be an immediate Separation, and a firm Union settled between herself and Devolle. Inspir'd by these Hopes, she sent for Lawrence; and, after some trifling conversation upon different Subjects, artfully drew him into the old Theme of Love: In which she made such Advances, that the enraptur'd Lover push'd for the immediate Consummation of his Wishes.

Not to tire my Readers with too much of the Conversation upon this Subject, I shall only inform them,

them, that Mr. Lawrence so far prevail'd with Lydia, that she promised the first night Mr. Devolle lay abroad, to let him know it; and that she would give him the Key of the Garden, by which he might let himself in, and lay concealed in the Alcove of the Left-hand, 'till he saw a Candle placed in such a Window. Upon that Signal he was to advance towards the House, and enter in at the Sash-Door into the Back-Parlour, which she promised to leave open for the Purpose, then come up the great Stairs, where a Lanthorn was always burning, and open the Chamber Door, that was mark'd with the Letters A Z in Chalk, where she should be, and welcome him to what he had so often call'd his highest Happiness.

Lydia had no sooner settled this Appointment with Lawrence, than she sought an Opportunity to have a private Conference with Devolle, which she could not obtain till the next Day; for Devolle had now recover'd his Temper, and was so captivated with the Caresses of his Wife, that he kept with her all that Night.

Soon as Mr. Devolle appear'd in the Morning, Lydia threw herself in his Way, and, with a malicious Smile, wished him Joy of his returned Happiness, adding, "I think the only Way for a Husband to preserve his Peace, is to let his Wife have her own Way, and then the Family is sure to be quiet," Devolle's Mind was not so tho-

roughly heal'd, but these doubtful Speeches fretted it sore again, and Lydia spar'd no pains to give new Birth to his Suspicions. This she did so effectually, that all his former Agonies returned; which she clenched, by telling him, upon her own knowledge he had reason of his Jealousy; promising at the same Time, That if he would curb in his Passion, and feign an easy Good-nature to his Wife so as not to alarm her Suspicion, she would give him ocular Proof of her Dishonesty.

The enraged Husband at this Tale started almost in Madness; and vow'd such Vengeance on his Wife as the most cruel Heart did never before devise: But Lydia soon reduced his Rage, by telling him such Passion would betray his Uneasiness and prevent the Detection she had plan'd. Devolle, impatient of a Proof, forced himself into Temper, and listened to the wicked Scheme of Lydia.——If you keep up your Gaiety, said she, it will beget Security in your Wife, and she will not alter the Appointment she has made to your dishonour: for I over-heard her the Day before Yesterday, promise Mr. Lawrence a private Meeting in her Chamber the first Night you stay'd from Home; told him how to come in the Back-way thro' the Garden, and gave him Directions how to find her Chamber, This added she, if my Ears are not false, is true. I own said she with her usual Hypocrisy, I could not help being shock'd when I heard the Appointment, and having some
Tenderness

Tenderneſs for this wicked Woman, tho' undeſervedly, once reſolved to conceal her Baſeneſs: But my Love for you, too powerful for my prudence, would not let me hide a Fact ſo prejudicial to your Honour, nor ſee you cheated into Happineſs, by the falſe Smiles of a vicious Wife.

Theſe Profeſſions of Friendſhip, extorted from the diſtracted Devolle equal returns of Love and Gratitude, with large Promiſes of friendly Affection, which he vow'd for ever to nourish in his Boſom for the protector of his Honour.

Lydia then proceeded to give him proper Inſtructions as thus: "To morrow, ſaid ſhe, you muſt feign ſome urgent Buſineſs, that calls you ſome Miles off, and will detain you at leaſt two days; accordingly, you ſhall take leave of your Wife, with all the good humour you can poſſibly aſſume. By this means you will get out of the Houſe without giving the leaſt Suſpicion. When you are gone, your Wife will certainly make uſe of the Opportunity to meet her Gallant. Now do you conceal yourſelf hard by; and, in the Evening I'll give you Notice, let you into the Houſe and carry you to my Chamber, where you ſhall wait 'till Mr. Lawrence comes to his Appointment; then ruſh in upon them, and let your Eyes convince you of the Truth of what I have aſſerted."

Thus was the Deſign laid, and the next day Devolle perform'd his part, took leave of his Family
and

and lay in Ambush, as directed while Lydia went to Lawrence, with the News of Mr. Devolle's Absence, and appointed him at Twelve at Night to come thro' the Garden, as she before had promised him. The eager Lover promised to be punctual, and Lydia returned Home and kept Mrs. Devolle Company, impatient for the Hour her Scene of Villainy should begin.

Soon as Mrs. Devolle was set down to Supper, and all the Servants busy, Lydia took an Occasion to go out of the Room, let in the Husband, lock him up in a Closet in her own Chamber, and then sat down with Mrs. Devolle, till she went to Bed. Lydia attended her to the Door; and, under pretence of the Candles going out, slipped away the Key of her Chamber, that the Lover might have free Admittance, and then chalked the Door; that he might not mistake the Chamber. This done, she returned to compleat her Project, and open the Garden Door, according to her Promise. All being finished, she went to her Chamber and joined Mr. Devolle, both watching for Mr. Lawrence's Arrival.

The Lover impatient to possess the Charms of his beloved Lydia, came exactly to his Time. The Clock had no sooner struck Twelve, than they heard him upon the Stairs, and soon after heard him open Mrs. Devolle's Door, who was by this time fallen into a gentle Slumber.

He

He had no sooner looked into the Room, than the enraged Husband burst out; and going, to make a violent stab at him, in his Confusion and Agony fell down, Mr. Lawrence, tho' so unexpectedly attacked had still presence of Mind to keep the prostrate Assailant upon the Ground.

The Noise awaken'd Mrs. Devolle, and her Screams alarm'd the Servants, who instantly appeared with Lights and Arms, supposing Thieves had broke into the House, and occasioned that Outcry: But how were they amazed, when they saw their Master prostrate on the Ground. and Mr. Lawrence standing over him with a drawn Sword in their Lady's Bed-Chamber, who stood in the corner of the Room like a Statue, without any Marks of Life or Motion? nor was Mr. Lawrence less astonished, when the Lights shewed him where he was, and whom he had been contending with.

The Servants having rais'd their Master, he snatch'd suddenly a Pistol from one of them, and fir'd at Mr. Lawrence, before they could prevent him, but happily missed him Lydia had kept silent till now, but, upon the Report of the Pistol came screaming in, as if she till then had been asleep, and heard nothing of the Tumult.

The Servants seeing them both engag'd, would not give them Time for Argument, but immediately laid fast hold of their Master. and forc'd
Mr.

Mr. Lawrence out of the House. He was no sooner gone but Mr. Devolle turned all his Rage against his Wife; called her by the most opprobrious Names, while the poor Lady stood silent and incapable of one Word in her Defence. This mute Confusion he took for Marks of Guilt; and snatching a Sword offer'd to plunge it into her Breast: The affrighted Mrs. Devolle screamed and ran down Stairs naked as she was, and would have left the House so, had not a Maid Servant pursu'd her and furnish'd her with some of her own Cloaths, and then conducted her to a little Hovel just by, kept by the Maids Mother.

The Wife being thus removed, Lydia's Business was now to reduce Mr. Devolle to Temper, and entice him to make her the only Object of his Wishes: Which was no easy Part to play, for he had a sincere Affection for his Wife; and however he had toy'd with Lydia, drawn to it by her artful insinuations, he could not presently root her from his Heart. Besides, the cruel Treatment he thought he had received from what he loved rather gave him a Detestation for the whole Sex, than any Inclination to make a fresh Engagement. Added to this, his Mind was busied with another Passion, Revenge. He would have gone that Instant to seek Mr. Lawrence, had not Lydia ordered the Servants to detain him, for she knew that might possibly discover all. Should they come to a Conference, he might clear up many Points that
would

would undo all she had been labouring for; or, should they fight, and Mr. Devolle should conquer, he would be obliged to fly, or perhaps be executed, and that Way blow up all her Hopes of Grandeur. Thus did she ponder in her Mind the various Accidents that might break out to ruin her.

What endless Pains does Wickedness employ, to bring about that which Innocence and Virtue might effect without Fear or Fatigue! But when the Mind is once tainted with Vice, it sees false Prospect of Pleasure, thro' the ting'd Mirror of Corruption, and never once consults the purer Glass of Truth and Honesty.

Lydia now, in order to prevent an explanation between the contending parties (each enraged without Cause against the other) sent a Letter to Mr. Lawrence's Mother, telling her the foul Crime he had been detected in, and the Vengeance Mr. Devolle threatened.

The good Lady, fond of her Son, and anxious for his Safety, laid before him her Fears, and begged him to abscond 'till the Heat of the Affair was over: But the undaunted Innocence of Lawrence stood boldly up to justify himself; declaring he was wronged, and would stay and clear his Honour, or fall in the Defence of it.

His Mother shock'd at his Resolution, privately hired four Men who seiz'd him in his own House, and carried him to a Relation's, many Miles distant; where, by his Mother's Directions he was detain'd 'till her Order should release him.

This was a Master-piece of Contrivance in Lydia and had the desir'd Effect, for his Flight confirm'd Devolle, no Artifice had been used to delude him, that all he had seen was Fact, without any Circumstances to make him doubt his Wife's Dishonesty, or Lydia's firm Attachment to his Interest, and Regard for his Honour.

Mrs. Devolle this Time (which was that Night and the next Day) remained where the poor trusty Girl had placed her, in silent Sorrow and flowing Tears. The good old Dame of the Hovel often urged her to send to Mr. Devolle, or to let her fetch her Father, but all to no Purpose. The Mention of either of them only renewed her Grief and drew a fresh stream from her Eyes.

The old Woman, however obstinate, Mrs. Devolle appeared, thought it would be proper to bring her Husband and she together, therefore officiously went out, without giving her any Notice, to Mr. Devolle. But Betsey, who only waited for her Absence, the Instant she was gone, set out; and was not heard of 'till she sent a Letter, which will be inserted in its proper Place.

Lydia

Lydia had now removed all obstacles to her Happiness. The Wife was disgrac'd, and the Lover flown, to avoid the Husband's Vengeance. All her Business was to sooth Mr. Devolle; who, spite of his Resentment wore a gloom of Sorrow, which clouded the Pleasure Lydia thought to raise in him. Every now and then he would burst out into a Sigh, that marked an over charged Heart and cry, "I wonder where my Wife is gone! Sure she has not made away with herself! I should be sorry if she had.

Lydia looked upon this Pity as some Remains of Love, and took all methods to erase it from his Thoughts, by laying before him the Ingratitude of Betsey, and wounding the Honour of one, who raised her from Poverty.

While Mr. Devolle was in one of his Melancholy Fits, the old Woman order'd her Daughter to take an Opportunity of speaking to him, and let him know where his Wife was; adding, That if some Care was not taken of her, her Grief would kill her.

The Girl obey'd her Mother, and deliver'd her Message, which Mr. Devolle received with an affected Rage and real Transport.

Lydia would have prevented his going to her, but Mr. Devolle, to cover the tender Sentiments of his Heart and eager Wishes to behold her, put

on a rigid Countenance and cried; "Yes, I will go and upbraid her with her Infamy. I'll lay the Foulness of her Crime before her, then turn her out to wander with the Terrors of a guilty Mind, 'till she feels the Vengeance that awaits such Baseness," But he was disappointed; for, when he came to the old Woman's House, he found the Door open, but Betsey was gone: and though he sent several People in pursuit of her, 'twas in vain; they all return'd without being able to give the least intelligence.

Devolle could not help shewing some Marks of Uneasiness at his Disappointment, which were perceived by Lydia, and greatly enrag'd her, You do well, said she, to shew so much Tenderness for a Prostitute, who only married you for your Money; and, as soon as she had got possession of that, shew'd the Contempt she had for your person: and I, instigated by no Motive but Love, who have yielded up my Virtue and Friendship to please and serve you, I am not, it seems, worthy your least Regard.

Devolle, who could not bear Reproof, answered as warmly on his Part, till very high Words arose, and made a down right Quarrel: The Consequence of which was, for some Days a mute, sullen Behaviour on both Sides, and tho' they made it up again, yet the Subject was soon renewed and a fresh Anger sprung from it.

Mr.

Mr. Ward now heard of his Daughter's Disgrace, and flew to Mr. Devolle to know the Truth; from whom he heard a full detail of her Behaviour, with many Circumstances aggravated by the malicious Lydia, who stood by and confirm'd all Mr. Devolle related.

The poor old Man was struck with Horror at the Story, burst into Tears; and, without uttering one Word withdrew: But in his Face it was too plainly writ, the Vengeance he intended to execute upon his poor unhappy Daughter.

But providence prevented the intended Mischief for he no sooner came home, than he was seiz'd with a violent Pleurisy, which in three Days, carried him off, and put a sudden stop to those Pangs of Heart he might have suffer'd for Years to come, for his Child's Error.

His Will he had made a Year before, leaving what little Effects he had to his Daughter Betsey; which, since this Story, he would in all likelihood have alter'd: But Death came in a Hurry to him, and prevented his Intentions.

Mr. Devolle took Possession, and buried Mr. Ward. The Effects amounted to the Value of Eight Hundred Pounds; which being properly his Wife's, to shew his Detestation of her, he
would

would not touch one Penny of, but gave it to the Poor of the Parish where Mr. Ward died.

Mr. Devolle was still uneasy, and Lydia not satisfied with his Behaviour. His Inclinations began to pall, and her Hopes were not answered in regard to the Power and Riches she should command upon the supplanting of Betsey. Besides her Pride was hurt, for the People began to whisper she was Mr. Devolle's Mistress; and the Report so far prevailed, that the Ladies that were formerly constant visitants, now shunned the House; alledging, that they had a great Regard for Mrs. Devolle, but while that Creature sits at the Head of the Table, no modest Woman can keep herself in Countenance at it.

These reports soon reached Lydia's Ear, whose Pride was not beneath the best of them, and therefore threw out her invectives as grossly on her Part, till it became a common Talk.

As Truth will always prevail, it is not strange that she kept her station in this Affair. The Argument turned against Lydia, and a general Dislike to her Character ran thro' the whole Place.

This Report, together with the Neglect Mr. Devolle shew'd her, gave her no small Mortification, for she plainly perceived, she could not long maintain her power in that House; she therefore resolved to employ all her Art to get a Settlement from

from him, and what other things of Value she could coax out of him against a Separation, which she saw must unavoidably be the Consequence of this growing indifference.

She so far succeeded in her Scheme, by watching Mr. Devolle's Intervals of Good-humour as to get several valuable Presents from him; in particular she obtained his Wife's Gold Watch, which was a very rich one, set round with Jewels, and many curious Trinkets joined to it: also her Diamond Ear-Rings, which cost upwards of Four Hundred Pounds, and was just upon the point of getting a Settlement of Two Hundred Pounds a Year, when an Accident happen'd that threw Mr. Devolle into so violent a Sorrow, that he locked himself up, would admit of no Conversation, not even Lydia's, which entirely put a stop to the Scheme she had laid to make her Fortune. It was a Letter from his Wife, who had now been absent upwards of a Year.—The Contents were as follows.

“DEAR SIR,
EXCUSE this last Trouble from your wronged and ruined Wife. I cannot die in Peace without making a new Declaration of my Innocence, tho' I can't bring one Circumstance to prove it, I do declare upon my Soul, which will soon be called to it's Account before a judge, that Art, Cunning, or Falshood can't deceive, that I am entirely guiltless, in Thought, Word, or Deed
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of every Circumstance laid to my Charge. Mr. Lawrence never once gave the most distant Hint of any Liking he had to me; or did I, by my Behaviour ever give him Reason to think I had any Inclination towards him. He was your Friend; as such I respected, valued, and entertained him: Nay more, I often thought it would not be long before he would be in some Measure allied to my Family, for I observed he was very particular in his Compliments to Lydia. That was my Opinion for a great while, till at length I found it was not well grounded, by hearing he had already a Wife; tho' from some Difference between them, they had parted, and he never made the least Mention of her.

From this Time I looked upon his Behaviour to Lydia as Complaisance, without Design; for it never entered my Thoughts that a Gentleman, whom I had so often heard you praise for Honour, would endeavour, in his Friends House to corrupt any one in his Family: Nor was my Opinion of Lydia's Virtue less noble, for I knew her full of Worth of Friendship, and capable of no Action that would stain your Honour, or her own: Tho' 'tis possible my Judgment may err, and I be deceived in both their Characters.

It is certain Mr. Lawrence was in my Chamber, when I did not know he was in the House: How he came there, who let him in, or what was his Business, I am entirely ignorant. I must confess,
it

it bears the Face of a wicked Contrivance, to ruin me, and force you to an Act of Cruelty, that must destroy our everlasting peace, if ever you should reach the Truth; and that you will I do believe, for Villainy is never long hid. It always is attended with a Weakness that discovers it, by the very means it used to conceal it.

Dear Mr. Devolle, be not too severe in your censures on me, Not that I beg it in order to bring about a Reconcilement; that cannot be, for you shall never know in what Part of the World I breathe.

I have no more to say, unless it be to assure you that my Prayers are daily offer'd up to heaven for your peace and safety; and shall be, while I groan under this Load of Life. Farewell; I have been ill ever since I left you. Grief has so worn me; that should we meet you would not know your poor afflicted Betsey; I have but one Friend in the World, and with her I now live, and share her narrow Fortune. Upon my Death bed I shall again protest my Innocence, which my Friend has promised to send you Word of, the Moment I expire. Till that Day comes; expect to hear no more of your disconsolate,

BETSEY.

The various Emotions Mr. Devolle felt while he read this Letter are not to be express'd. The hint given that it was a plan'd Villainy, to destroy his Peace, inspir'd him with Rage, from thence revolving

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ving in his Mind the unhappy situation his Wife was in, and her Resolution never to see him more the Tears burst from his Eyes, and quench'd his Passion in a Flood of tender Sorrow. He immediately looked upon Lydia, if any Wickedness had been practis'd to have a share in it; though he could not prove it on her, his Suspicion ran so high, that he began to loath the Sight of her.

He read the Letter twenty Times a Day; and, at every Reading, his Wife's Innocence gain'd Credit with him: Till at length not being able to clear any Circumstance to his Satisfaction, he resolv'd to find out his Wife: Accordingly he sent Posts to enquire at every Place that ever she was known to visit at, or had the least Acquaintance with. He went himself to find Mr. Lawrence, but could not get any intelligence of him, more than that he had left the Country, and never been heard of since.

Mr. Devolle's suspicions of Lydia encreas'd every Hour and the great pains he took to find out his Wife, made the whole Country ring with the Story; in the Relation of which Lydia's Character was handled very severelly, by all Sorts of People.

Among the many that made free with her upon this Occasion, Rachel, whom she had formerly try'd to engage in her wicked Project of Poisoning Mrs. Devolle, was not the most silent. She had hitherto

hitherto kept the Secret, nor ever mentioned the Discourse Lydia once had with her; but now finding her Favour decrease, and hoping to make another Friend in the Family, she whispered it every where, and in such oblique Terms, as made the People think it much worse than she could prove it. For Example, when Lydia was talked of, she would say, "Yes, I know Mrs. Lydia is a very good Woman—She loves Poison too—She was resolved my poor Mistress should not stay long here."

These sayings of Rachel's greatly alarm'd the Neighbourhood, and every one thought there was some meaning in the Girl's mysterious Speeches, more than they could immediately find out. Lydia was soon informed of this, and rated the Maid very severely, which only provoked her to be more explicit in her Tale, till at length, in plain Words, she declared that Lydia would have brib'd her to Poison her Mistress; but, upon her refusing, turned it off with a frivolous excuse; that she proposed it to her only to try her Virtue. This Accusation was so horrid, that many doubted the Veracity of it; and others more credulous, were afraid to mention it, without being able to prove it, lest Lydia should punish them for aspersing her Character.

While this was doing, Mr. Lawrence, who had been all this while confined by his Relations in the Country, at last obtained leave to write a Letter

to his Mother ; in which he directed her to look into a private Drawer in his Bureau, where she would find some Notes that would infallibly prove his Innocence, in regard to any Designs upon Mrs. Devolle, and convince her Husband of the Reason of his frequent Visits to his House.

The old Lady search'd as directed ; and found several Notes and Letters, full of amorous expressions from Lydia ; nay, in one was an absolute Appointment for him to come into the House after the Family were in Bed.

He also observed in his Letter, that being tender of the Lady's Honour, he had thus long conceal'd it ; yet, upon a better Advice, he thought it a duty incumbent on him, to use all means to vindicate an injured Wife, and make a deceiv'd Husband easy.

His Mother took these Papers and carry'd them to Mr. Devolle, but not before Lydia had made off. The Reason of her sudden disappearing was owing to Rachels Report ; which grew so common, that the People made no scruple of telling her of it as she walked along. Shock'd at the Reflections cast on her, and fearing something more would come on it, she packed up all the Presents Mr Devolle had made her, and what other things of Value she had obtained from his Wife, and retired without making any one privy to her Flight.

This sudden Elopement of Lydia's fully convinced Mr. Devolle that some wicked Practices had been

been used with his Wife; and that this hypocritical Woman, under the mask of Friendship, had formed Schemes to ruin his Peace for ever: He therefore renewed his Search after his Wife, but still in vain.

To confirm him in his Opinion of Lydia, Mr. Lawrence's Mother came at this Time, and produced the Letters found in her Son's Bureau. He had no sooner read them, than he started almost into a Frenzy. What! cried he, have I then parted from my Wife, given up my own pleasure, and all I doated on, to this cruel Woman's Falshoods! But why should I blame her? My own Credulity, my own Folly were the Cause. Had she not found me a Fool, she never durst have tempted me to such Actions. Both Soul and Body she endeavoured to ensnare, for had not proper Care been taken, I had added Mr. Lawrence's Blood to my Crimes. Dear Madam, (continued he to the old Lady) I beg he may be sent for immediately, and if half my Estate will make Reparation for the wrong I have done him, he shall have it.—If I could but recall my afflicted Wife, and make her Satisfaction, I should leave the World with pleasure; but, till then, I must groan upon the Rack, in all the Agonies of Despair and Love.

While he was in this situation a Letter came that put an Everlasting End to all his Hopes. It was as follows.

"SIR

SIR,

ACCORDING to the Directions given me by your Wife upon her Death-bed, I send you this Account. Ever since your unjust Rage drove her from your House, she has been with me. I can't say lived, for every Hour has been spent in Tears and Sighs. The Sustenance she has taken has been so small, that it is a great wonder to me how she could breathe so long. She has so often attested her Innocence of the Fact you charged her with in such warm Terms; wishing such Imprecations on her, of what she then declared was not Truth, that he must be a Brute, void of Religion and Humanity, that could not harbour the least doubt about her Honesty—On Sunday last she was seiz'd suddenly and took to her Bed; and being sensible her Life was ending, she begg'd I would send for a Divine. I did so, who came just in Time to hear her last Words. Before him, his Clerk and myself, she again avow'd all she had formerly declared was Truth, and confirmed it by the most holy Ceremony——Then sunk upon her Pillow without asking for any Thing; but, fixing her Eyes to Heaven, she just made a murmuring Sound, from which we could at different Times, pick out the Words—Husband—bless him—forgive—Love—too cruel—Mercy—save him—and the like.

In this Manner, Sir, she continued one whole Day.—A few Hours after she seemed to struggle and pulled the Bed-cloaths very hard; and I could hear

hear to say, more plainly than I could the Day before—I cant see him—Don't go—Don't go. With these Words she gave a great Sigh, and expired. These are the whole particulars, which I have faithfully transmitted to you, as she desired.

In our Conversations, I often advised her to send to you, but she would never consent to let you know where she was; alledging, that she was afraid you wanted to get rid of her, and would not shew any Desire to see you, lest it should interrupt your Happiness.

O, Sir, you don't know the Jewel you have lost and whatever Villainy was practis'd against her, if she was not honest, Virtue does not belong to Woman, Farewell.
J. Z.

Mr. Devolle, after the first Agonies this Letter gave him were over, fell into a deep Melancholly and shun'd all Sorts of Conversation. In this condition he continued about six Months, and then died of a broken Heart.

Mr. Lawrence came Home, tho' too late to see Mr. Devolle; but, as he was a spirited young Fellow, upon hearing many Circumstances of Lydia, he spared no pains to apprehend her; and entertain'd Rachel in his Mother's House, in order to be an Evidence against her, if ever he should be so fortunate to lay hold on her.

Having

Having thus finish'd the Catastrophe of this much Injur'd Woman, and her deceiv'd Husband, It may not be amiss to see what became of the vile Contriver of so much Cruelty and wickedness.

Lydia as has been before mention'd, finding her Character blasted, and fearing the testimony of of Rachel might possibly affect her in a manner rather more disagreeable to her, than taken away her Reputation; to secure her Person, suddenly left the place, by way of preventing worse Consequences.

Her treachery coming to Light in so short a Time afterwards, the Concern which was universally known for so amiable a Woman as Mrs. Devolle, and a Pity so worthy a Man as her Husband should be so imposed upon, abused and betray'd, swallow'd up all other Conversations; so that Lydia was not thought on for some time.

But as soon as the Funerals of this unfortunate Couple were perform'd, and we think it necessary to declare, that Mr. Lawrence with the advice of other Friends to the deceas'd, kindly order'd that they should be both inter'd in one Grave, and a handsome Monument erected to their Memories thus uniting in the Tomb those whom cruelty, and Ambition had denied to be when living.

When this mournful Ceremony was over, and the

the Grief of Friends rather abated, it was determined to seek after the detestable Lydia, that if she could be found she might suffer all the Punishment the Laws could inflict.

But to give the Reader a further Account of the accumulated Vices of this wicked Woman, it will be necessary to trace her from the Time she left Mr. Devolle's House, till the Time she was apprehended.

Having conveyed her Cloaths, and the rest of her ill gotten Property, secretly away to the Cottage of an old Woman whose Poverty had made her a Creature to her for the sake of what she could get, she had them put in a Waggon and convey'd to London, this being done as secret as possible, she had only herself to remove which she did soon after, giving the old Woman a few Guineas never to mention any thing about the matter, as the old Woman's Cottage was near the road side and several of the Stages passed by it was an easy matter to get a passage in one of those Vehicles to the place where she designed to hide herself.

This she accomplish'd early the next Morning and bid farewell to a place which she alone had made miserable, where she had been the wrongful accuser of Innocence, and the Murtherer of domestic Peace and Happiness.

Yet tho' her own guilty Conscience must every
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moment upbraid her with the horribleness of her Crimes, she did not appear the least dejected, but rather more cheerful, entertaining her Fellow Travellers with pleasant Stories and smart Sayings, so that she was the Life of the Company.

Custom can make Crimes set as easy on the vicious inclin'd, as the best good Nature and Humanity can upon Virtue, they can put on the Smile of Affability the behaviour of Modesty, nay, and upon Occasion let fall the Tears of Pity seemingly for those in distress, but we may say with Hamlet that one may smile, and smile, and be a Villain.

When they stopped at the Inn to Dinner, the Company began to have a full view of each other, and consisted of.—Besides Lydia an elderly Lady very lusty, and her Maid, a young Gentleman about Twenty three, and a very pretty modest young Lady about Eighteen who spoke very little, and who seemed rather embarrassed in her Behaviour, indeed the truth is, this young Lady and young Gentleman had given their Parents the slip, and were going to London to employ a Person, to be kind enough to give his Sanction towards their drawing a little closer together.

The Reader perhaps may think a Stage Coach rather too public a method, for Business which required secrecy and dispatch, but to obviate this Conclusion, be it known that they had travelled
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some Miles across the Country in a Post Chaise, and since then on Foot, and had taken the Stage as the best Blind they could think of to evade a pursuit.

At Dinner time Lydia took no small notice of the Gentleman, and sent forth several amorous Glances, which seemed to be very well understood, and which were not unperceived by the young Lady, who seemed to have lost her Appetite by travelling, and her quondam Husband was so much engag'd with the Agreeableness of the smiling Miss Lydia, that he could not find time to comfort with his Affiduities the afflicted Fair.— Indeed Lydia had long determined to exert all her Influence, to display all her Charms, and by every art she was Mistress of (and they were not a few) subdue all the Men she could, in order to make the best Market she was able, and replenish her Pocket, or keep it so that she should have no fear of being reduced to necessity.

After Dinner they got in the stage again, and the Evening of the Day landed them safe at an Inn in Holborn, where the Company very fortunately for the young Lady, whose uneasiness began to be more visible every moment, and Lydia began to hope a Conquest over her Fellow Travelers, indeed though Interest was her principle, yet she had no small share of spite in her Composition for having observed the young Lady to be rather chagrined at her being treated with so much

attention by the Gentleman, she seemed to glory in her uneasiness, as though her chief Happiness consisted in making other people unhappy, the most diabolical Idea which can enter into a Human Creature.

However her triumph was short for on their Arrival at the Inn as I have before said, a Separation took place, but not without the lusty old Lady inviting Lydia to come and see her, at the same Time giving her a Card to find out her Habitation and who this good Lady was will be seen in the Course of this Narrative.

As this was not the Inn where Lydia's Cloaths &c. were directed, she only slept there one Night and the next Morning went to that where the Waggon put up, where having found every thing safe and having adjusted her appearance, she went to enquire for a Relation near the Hay Market, who she wished, as she was a Stranger, to assist her in getting a genteel Apartment.

This kind Relation, who by the bye, was one of those called Cousins, soon procured what she desired, and that afternoon her Boxes were removed into the narrow part of St. James Street and she took possession of an elegant first Floor, which she intended to make those who were most in her Favour pay for.

But before we proceed any further with her Affairs,

fairs in this Line, it will not be amiss to acquaint the Reader with her last infernal plan, to establish the truth of her former Declarations to Mr. Devolle, to effect this she was no sooner settled in her new Apartment than she wrote the following Letter to him, which however he never receiv'd.

Sir,

As you may perhaps wonder at my disappearance, and impute that to guilt, which was purely prompted by innocence; I declare that the sole Cause of my abrupt departure, is owing to your Cruelty and Folly, your Cruelty to me in lending the least Attention to the vile aspersions which are thrown on my spotless Character, and your own Folly in not believing every Syllable truth which I have vouched in regard to that bad Woman you call your Wife.

As I am determined to spend the remainder of my Life in some obscure place, where none that I have formerly known shall hear of me again, so you may take this in as much earnest as if it was my dying moments, that your Wife is absolutely guilty; and that I am as innocent of duplicity or falshood, as the Child unborn.

As Mr. Devolle was dead, this Letter fell into the hands of Mr. Lawrence, but as it had no Date or place of Abode, he could not trace out the vile Incendiary, to whom we shall now return.

Lydia

Lydia dressed herself out to the be best Advantage, and visited all the publick Places, and soon drew a number of Admirers, for the Men of Gallantry and Fashion in this Metropolis, do not form Connections with Ladies of easy Virtue, for their Wit, Beauty, or Elegance, but as Folly and Whom directs, and there are numbers among the most celebrated Courtezans who have not one qualification to recommend them, yet are so much followed as to become general Toasts.

Lydia made a pretty good Market for some Time among this sort of Gentry, her Lodging was often distinguished by a Chair or a Chariot at the Door, and her living was in the most elegant Stile, but as the old Proverb says (which I must own is somewhat coarse) that every Dog must have it's Day, so Fate seemed to order it with Lydia, for an Irish Gentleman who was remarkable for his Affiduities towards her, and at length so far prevailed with her tender Heart as to admit him both to Bed and Board, and to take upon herself the Surname of Conner, without however the Sanction of the Church.

As Lydia always considered Mr. Conner as a Man of Fortune, they lived for some time very happy together, at last however he desired her to accompany him to a Relation a few Miles out of Town; who he said had often been solicitous to see his Wife, and wished her to come and spend a few Days with them, which she consented to, but when they arrived at the Lady's House, how was Lydia surprised to find in his Aunt Conner
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the very identical fat Lady who came to Town in the Stage, They were both astonished but Mr. Conner was more astonished than any body else; the name of Conner was not what she was invited to visit her by, nor was the direction to this place; however the fat Lady soon reconciled that matter, and the first two Days passed very agreeably.

The third Mr. Conner pretended Business in Town, took his leave and promised to return that Evening, but in Fact went directly to Lydia's Lodgings and plundered her of every thing she had which was worth a Shilling.

Mr. Conner not returning according to promise, Lydia grew very uneasy and the next Morning as soon as it was light set out for Town, where she soon found what had happened; she returned with the utmost expedition to the old Lady, but lack-a-day, she had set out as soon as she was gone, and no Account could be got of her. This threw Lydia into a Fever, to think there was anyone could match her in Art and Wickedness; her Illness obliged her to part with her Trinkets and Cloaths; with her person much altered for the worst, and reduced to the last Shilling, she was turned into the Street by her Landlady for Rent, which she could not pay; she now commenced Prostitute among the lowest and most abandoned of that Order till entirely hag'd out, she had no other resource than to become a Servant at a House of Ill Fame, where at last she was apprehended and committed to Prison, took her Trial, where Rachel's Evidence with many concurring Circumstances to back

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it, convicted her, and she was cast for Transportation but escaped the Punishment, by dying in almost deplorable Condition in Prison.

During her Imprisonment her Behaviour was wicked to the last, indeed her expressions seemed to border on Madness. Here she found Mr. Conner under Sentence of Death for a Highway Robbery.

Thus ended this Wickedest of Womankind, from whose Fate it is hoped others will take Example, and shun the Temptations of Vice and Ambition.

By such means was a beautiful Woman ruin'd, by what the World look'd upon as good Fortune, marrying above her Expectations. Had she been coupled to one of her own Sphere, it would not have been in her Power to have entertained Lydia, put her upon a Footing in the World she could never hope to arrive at, and rais'd those seeds of Ambition that destroy'd her Virtue, and her Friend's Happiness.

I respect the poor, and never think the worse of any Person for their low Birth; yet I can't help observing, That when an obscure Person gets into Fortune's Favour, Pride generally attends them, and instead of being thankful for what they have unexpectedly received, stop at no means to gratify a growing Ambition, that knows no Bounds, and so lose the present blessing in searching after the future. This I say, is too generally the Case, but I hope my Reader will remember this Hint, and be contented with what Providence bestows, nor sacrifice their Virtue to their Ambition.

F I N I S.



